



ACANTHORHYNCHUS SUPERCILIOSUS: Gould.

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White-eyebrowed Spine-bill.

Acanthorhynchus superciliosus, Gould in Proc. of Zool. Soc., Part V. p. 24.
Bool-jeet, Aborigines of the lowland districts of Western Australia.

HITHERTO I have only received this fine and well-marked species of Spine-billed Honey-eater from Western Australia, but hereafter it will doubtless be found to range over a much greater extent of country; although a very local bird, it is tolerably abundant both at Swan River and King George's Sound, and is found to give a decided preference to the forests of Banksias, upon the blossoms of which trees it almost solely subsists. Its food, like that of the other members of its family, consists of insects and honey, for obtaining which its delicately organized bill and the filamentous form of its tongue are peculiarly adapted; the latter member being capable of considerable protrusion beyond the apex of the bill, thus enabling the bird to dive into the deepest interstices of the flowers, which its bill alone would not permit. Like its congeners, this species occasionally frequents the low shrub-like trees, and sometimes is even to be observed upon the ground in search of food. In its actions it displays great activity, darting about from branch to branch with a rapid zigzag motion; its flight is irregular and uneven, but it often rises perpendicularly in the air, uttering at the same time a rather pretty song; at others it emits a loud and strong note.

The nest, which is constructed among the large-leaved Banksias, is of a round compact form, and is composed of dried fine grasses, tendrils of flowers, narrow threads of bark and fine wiry fibrous roots matted together with zamia wool, forming a thick body, which is warmly lined with feathers and zamia wool mingled together; the external diameter of the nest is three inches, and that of the cavity about one inch and a quarter. The eggs are two in number, nine lines long by six and a half broad; their ground colour in some instances is a delicate buff, in others a very delicate bluish white with a few specks of reddish brown distributed over the surface, these specks being most numerous at the larger end, where they frequently assume the form of a zone. The breeding-season is in October.

The sexes present little or no difference in external appearance, but the female may generally be distinguished from her mate by her more diminutive size and the more slender contour of her body.

Crown of the head, all the upper surface, wings, and six middle tail-feathers greyish brown, the remainder of the tail-feathers black, largely tipped with white and narrowly margined on their external edges with brown; space between the bill and eye, and the ear-coverts blackish brown; stripe over the eye, chin, and a broader stripe beneath the eye white; back part of the neck light chestnut-brown; centre of the throat rich chestnut, bounded below by a crescent of white, which is succeeded by another of black; abdomen and under tail-coverts light greyish brown, in some specimens deepening into buff; irides reddish brown; bill black; legs dark brown.

The figures are those of a male and a female of the natural size.